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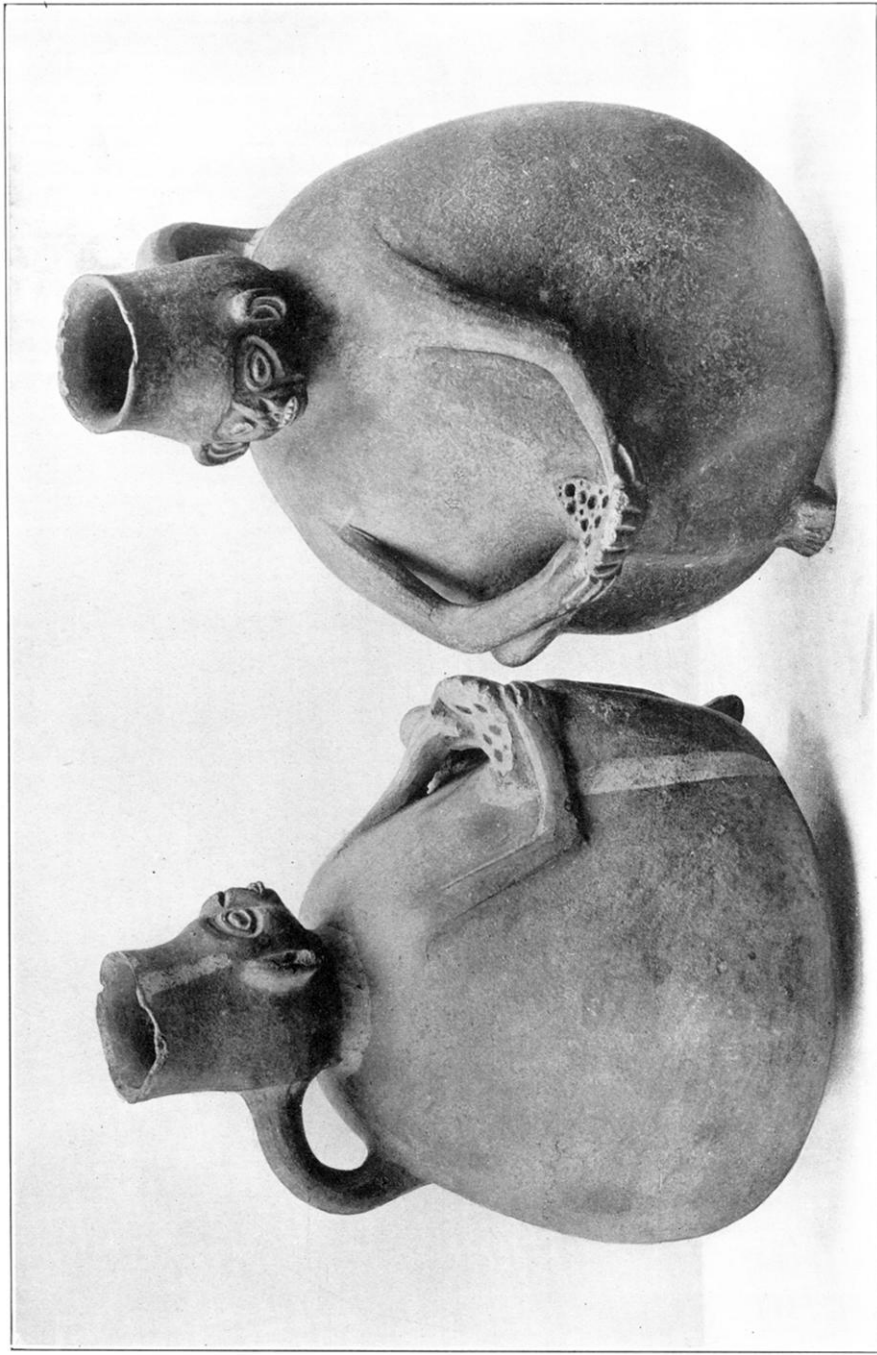
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AN ANCIENT PERUVIAN EFFIGY VASE EXHIBITING DISEASE OF THE FOOT

By ALBERT S. ASHMEAD

The accompanying reproduction, from a photograph, of a specimen of Peruvian pottery, represents without doubt a diseased condition of the sole of the foot as well as of the upper lip. In former writings on Peruvian earthenware vessels I have claimed that the amputation of the feet represented on so many of them was due to a disease typified on the faces of many of the images by loss of the upper lip and the nose — an eating disease to whose attacks the feet also were doubtless susceptible. In all the images I have had the opportunity of studying, I have found always amputation of both feet. In each of two cases, one foot had been cut off, while the condition of the other could not be ascertained as the man was represented as sitting on it. Dr R. Lehmann-Nitsche, of La Plata Museum, La Plata, Argentina, has published an account of one image (not beyond question) representing only one foot as amputated, the other foot being marked in outline, not modeled, on the surface of the clay.

I have always defined the disease represented on these vessels as *uta* (skin-tuberculosis), or as *uta* and syphilis combined; certainly *uta* (wolf-cancer) was the precolumbian disease most likely to be depicted in the facial mutilations of the human image. In the specimen which, through the courtesy of the American Museum of Natural History, I am permitted to illustrate, are represented multiple ulcerous perforations of the sole of the foot — the effect of *uta* and of nothing else. Syphilis would not cause such a pathological effect, while the perforation of the sole by leprosy would be unique. In the present specimen mutilation of the nose and the upper lip is also represented, although more crudely than usual. It is probable, then, that the disease which mutilated the face caused the mutilation of the foot also. It is probable, too, that later on in the progress of this disease, the cure of which was possible only



PRECOLUMBIAN WATER BOTTLE FROM PACHACAMAC GRAVEYARD, PERU, SHOWING DISEASE OF SOLE AND DISEASED UPPER LIP

In American Museum of Natural History, New York.

by cutting away the diseased portion, as the uta specialists of Peru today assert to be the case, the diseased member was amputated.

That feet were amputated as a punishment for crime, the conclusion of Carrasquilla of Colombia does not seem tenable, for if such were the fact there would be other graphic representations of the effect of such punishment, as cutting off the ears, hands, etc., which members, however, are not found lacking from the pottery.

Mr Charles W. Mead in a letter to the writer expresses the opinion that the cavities in the soles of the feet of images of the kind under consideration represent the pits left after extracting the egg-sacs of the pique, a species of sand flea.¹ I think this opinion is not tenable for the reason that the face of the image also is shown to be diseased and the represented ulcers are too large.

Mr Mead has published a plate from a clay model of ancient Peru showing a dance around wine or water bottles placed on the ground.² One of the dancers is represented with a square block for a foot — evidently a substitute for the natural foot which had been amputated. The musical instruments used in the dance are represented as being played. The bottles just referred to, found in old Peruvian burial places, are always represented as connected with the sick — those needing medical relief — and the dying, and with the thirsty. Even the stump of an amputated foot has been shown as having medicine applied from a cup by the owner of the crippled member. The dances above mentioned were then in reality "sick dances." The water bottles around which the participants danced, on the death of a patient were buried as an image of his spirit, representative of his human personality put into the grave with him.

The musical instruments in the hands of so many persons in supplicant (begging) attitude represented in clay on the mummy grave-pots, do not mean in my opinion that these individuals were really beggars owing to their diseases or mutilations, but rather that they were sick persons, applying superstitiously medical care in the way best known by them. They were trying to frighten away, to exorcise, the evil spirit of their diseases. Like their dances, the efforts made were a medical performance or treatment. They sup-

¹ See von Tschudi, *Travels in Peru*.

² *American Museum Journal*, vol. III, no. 4, fig. 2, suppl., 1903.

plicated some god perhaps in this superstitious way, praying him to cure their infirmities. Drums, which are shown in the hands of some of the Peruvian mortuary vessels in human form found in graves, are never buried with mummies, so far as is known to the writer, only their representations in the clay of the vessels. The covers of many, perhaps of all, of the drums of the ancient Peruvians were made from the skins of enemies. The drum idea does not seem consonant therefore with the idea of the peaceful journey of the soul of the departed to the after-world.

As already implied, I have never seen represented amputation of the hands or of one hand. This seems strange, for the hands as well as the feet would naturally have been attacked by the insect carriers of this disease. As clearly as I can explain it, the circumstance of absence from the pottery of human figures lacking one or both hands may be accounted for thus:

The ancient Peruvians believed that the soul took four days to journey from the grave to its future abode. Hence food and especially drink in that dry climate were requisite, and these therefore were buried with the corpse, which needed its hands to reach out for them. If the natural hands were mutilated they would not be so represented on the soul (or clay image) of the departed, but artificial hands would be given him; otherwise he might die of hunger or thirst on his trip to the moon. But this is a problematical explanation. I should like to know whether any European anthropologist has ever found on the mortuary earthenware of Peru evidence of mutilation (amputation) of the hands.

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